

The President. Well, I hope it doesn't complicate the trade environment. But you know, it seems to me that we have no higher responsibility than to protect the health and safety of our citizens, and everyone who has been following all of your reporting over the last 4 or 5 years knows that we have had continuing challenges in food safety. We have millions of people who get sick every year. And we're not trying to unfairly target foreign producers of food into our market. We don't ask them to meet any standards we don't meet. And indeed, if you look at the actions of this administration over the last 4 years, when we started, I think you can make a compelling case that we started working on things that were problems coming out of the American market first. So I just don't think that's right.

I don't want it to complicate the trade environment, but I'm not interested in trade in things that will make the American people sick.

1996 Campaign Financing

Q. Mr. President, did the Democratic National Committee send money to the States in order to get around the Federal spending limits that went along with accepting Federal money for the national campaign, sir?

The President. It's my understanding that everything the Democratic National Committee did had the prior approval of the lawyers. If they cleared it all in advance, then it was per-

fectly legal. And when this issue was raised about a year ago, the exact issue, I believe that that was clarified at that time. I'm sure that they had legal advice that they followed, and I believe the Republicans said that they did some of the same things and also had prior legal clearance.

Q. Mr. Clinton, do you feel that Mrs. Reno—she's been advised to go forward with the 90-day investigation into the fundraising calls of the Vice President—and perhaps Mr. Gore would like to comment, too—

The President. I think that—

Q. —do you feel that the 90-day investigation would be helpful?

The President. Well, if you read the statute, she can consider certain things in the 90-day period that are not permitted in the 30-day period. But I think this is a legal question, and it should be done based on an independent legal review with no pressure from the outside, from me, or from anyone else. And that's the way I intend to keep it, at least on my part.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Catherine Woteki, Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics; and Michael A. Friedman, Lead Deputy Commissioner for Operations, Food and Drug Administration.

Memorandum on the Food Safety Initiative

October 2, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Agriculture

Subject: Initiative to Ensure the Safety of Imported and Domestic Fruits and Vegetables

American consumers today enjoy the safest food supply in the world, and I am proud of my Administration's record in this area. We have taken significant steps to ensure that we maintain the safest food possible. We have put in place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and we have begun the process of developing enhanced safety standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We have

also expanded research, education, and surveillance activities through coordinated efforts of all agencies involved in food safety issues. Together, these measures will greatly improve the safety of the Nation's food supply.

We need to build on these efforts, and today I ask you to do so by focusing on the safety of fruits and vegetables. Although the produce Americans eat is very safe, we can and must do even better, especially at a time when Americans are eating more fruits and vegetables from all over the world. Last year, 38 percent of the fruit and 12 percent of the vegetables consumed by Americans came from overseas. We

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must ensure that fruits and vegetables coming from abroad are as safe as those produced in the United States, especially as we upgrade our own domestic standards.

To help accomplish this task, I plan to send to the Congress proposed legislation that will require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to halt imports of fruits, vegetables, or other food from any foreign country whose food safety systems and standards are not on par with those of the United States. This legislation, which will be similar to existing law requiring the USDA to halt the importation of meat and poultry from such countries, will enable the FDA to prevent the importation of potentially unsafe foreign produce. My Fiscal Year 1999 budget will provide the necessary funds to enable the FDA to expand dramatically its international food inspection force. With this greatly increased ability to inspect food safety conditions abroad and at points of entry, the FDA will be able to determine when to halt the importation of fruits and vegetables from foreign countries.

Today, I hereby direct two administrative actions that will better ensure the safety of fruits and vegetables coming from abroad, while continuing to improve the safety of domestic produce.

First, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture and in close cooperation with the agricultural community, to issue within 1 year from the date of this memorandum, guidance on good agricultural practices and good manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables. This guidance should address ways to prevent potential sources of contamination, should

take into account differences in both crops and regions, and should address food safety issues throughout the food production and distribution system. By providing the first-ever specific safety standards for fruits and vegetables, the guidance will improve the agricultural and manufacturing practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the U.S. market. To ensure that this guidance has the widest possible effect, I also direct the development of coordinated outreach and educational activities.

Second, I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Agriculture, to report back to me within 90 days from the date of this memorandum with a status report and complete schedule for the good agricultural and manufacturing practices, and a plan on how to improve the monitoring of agricultural and manufacturing practices abroad, to assist foreign countries to improve those practices where necessary, and to prevent the importation of unsafe produce, including by detecting unsafe food at the dock or border. I especially urge you to consider the best ways to target inspection and testing toward those areas where problems are most likely to occur.

In addition to taking these actions, you should accelerate whatever food safety research is necessary to support them. You should also call upon the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Labor, and other agencies as necessary, to provide you with assistance in achieving this goal. These steps, taken together and in coordination with the proposed legislation I will send to the Congress, will improve the safety of fruits and vegetables for all Americans.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Statement on the National Economy *October 3, 1997*

Today the Labor Department announced more good news for America's workers and their families. Real wages are rising, the American economy has created 13.2 million new jobs since the beginning of my administration, and for the first time in 24 years, the unemployment rate has remained at or below 5 percent for 6 consecutive months. We have the most solid Amer-

ican economy in a generation, with strong investment, low unemployment, and low inflation.

While the economy is strong, we still have more to do to keep the American jobs machine on the move and ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from our growing economy. We must continue our three-part economic strategy that is helping move America